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ABSTRACT

Changes in recent years in the Australian educational system, including school restructuring, decentralization, and different educators roles, has put increased pressure on principals. Principals may have to deal with different levels of authority for different issues. A previous study, began in 1988 and called The Beginning Principals Study was designed to examine common concerns and experiences of beginning principals. This paper reports results from that part of the study aimed at identifying common concerns among new principals in the first half year of their principalships. A varied group of four primary and four secondary school beginning principals from the state of Victoria was chosen for the study. Four researchers visited the principals at the beginning of the 1989 school year and three times during the year. Several telephone interviews were also conducted. In addition, questionnaires were sent to 53 beginning principals. Intensive research with the eight beginning principals revealed they shared seven major concerns: relationships with staff, policy and curriculum reviews and development, administrative structure and financial management, school image, communication within the school community, time management, and student discipline. Five minor concerns were also identified: school physical environment, central Ministry of Education support, collaborative decision making, nonteaching-staff management, and teacher management. Beginning principals responding to the survey were concerned with curriculum development, school finances, school image, student discipline, school buildings, and consultative procedures. The study will continue for 5 years, providing an opportunity to observe how the principals adapt to their new roles over a longer period. (Contains 13 references.) (JPT)

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EARLY PROFESSIONAL CONCERNS:

BECOMING A PRINCIPAL IN AUSTRALIA

Geoffrey W. Beeson and Robin J. Matthews

Victoria College, Australia

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G.W. Beeson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, April 1991.

This is one of a series of papers from the Beginning Principals Study, conducted by researchers from Victoria College, Australia.

Our former colleague John M. Edmonds, who, sadly, died in December 1989, made a significant contribution to the data on which this paper is based.

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EARLY PROFESSIONAL CONCERNS: BECOMING A PRINCIPAL IN AUSTRALIA

Geoffrey W. Beeson and Robin J. Matthews

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"... it is the dealing with the constant necessity to keep the school running that is critical. One thing I have found is that there's no ability to systematise what I do, such as 'between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. I'll do these things, between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. I'll do those things, and so on'. What I do is spend about 30 per cent of my time reacting to what people perceive as crises - that's reaction to staff, reaction to the kids, reaction to the minister."

"At this particular school the curriculum is out of the ark, but it's very hard to tell them [the staff] this"

"A few members of staff are 'teetering on the edge', on the point of resignation or not coping, because they are still coming to grips with what has happened to the school over the last three years. I have to approach this positively; I have already talked one out of resigning."

These comments from beginning school principals in the first few weeks in their new role are indicative of some areas of concern commonly held by new entrants to the principalship in primary and secondary schools in Victoria, Australia. They were made in the course of a study designed to develop a picture of the work life of the first-time principal. The study focussed initially on the expectations and concerns held, the challenges faced, and the approaches adopted by the new incumbents to deal with these. Longer term aims of the study are to identify keys to success for the important role of principal, appropriate support systems for the beginning principal, and research based training and induction.

This paper reports results from that part of the study aimed at identifying clusters of common professional concern amongst the new principals in the first half year of their principalships. Findings from a preliminary analysis have been reported elsewhere (Beeson and Matthews, in press).

The nature of schooling in Australia is outlined first, followed by the brief descriptions of the background to the study, its design, and the methods of analysis relevant to the findings reported in the paper.

Schooling in Australia

In Australia, schooling is primarily the responsibility of state governments, with the federal government providing resources for special programs such as those designed to redress educational disadvantage, and more recently, taking steps to achieve a greater level of commonality across the states in key curriculum areas.

Historically, the states have organised and conducted schooling from centralised Education Departments, but in recent years there has been a significant trend to devolve responsibility to defined education regions and to individual schools. Other recent changes include the restructuring of education bureaucracies, the closing down or regrouping of schools due to declining enrolments, an increased press for accountability, and a focus on providing for children with special needs. In addition, teachers' and principals' career and salary structures are currently in the process of change.

These changes, and the general turbulence created by them, place increased pressure on school principals and additional demands on the roles they are expected to perform. The principal may have to deal with different levels of authority on different issues, for example, staffing (central education ministry), staff development (regional office), curriculum (school council.)

In the state of Victoria, schooling is divided into primary (elementary) (Years P-6) and secondary (Years 7-12), and is compulsory from ages five to fifteen. Currently, approximately two-thirds of students complete Year 12, and that proportion is increasing. Teachers are employed under uniform terms and conditions across the state and are appointed to schools by the central Ministry of Education. Teacher unions have significant influence on the working conditions in schools. The current agreement between the teacher unions and the Ministry requires high levels of consultation and/or collaboration between principal and teachers in key areas of decision-making in the school. These areas included decisions on administrative matters (through a Local Administrative Committee), curriculum matters (through a Curriculum Committee), and appointment of staff to positions of responsibility (through appropriate selection panels).

School principals are appointed as a result of recommendation to the Ministry by the school council, following selection procedures specified by the Ministry. Applicants for principal positions are usually very experienced teachers, most having had twenty or more years in the classroom. While no formal qualifications are required beyond those needed for initial registration as a teacher, most applicants have undertaken further study, often in administration or related areas.

Background to the Study

Given the importance and complexity of the principal's role, it is somewhat surprising that there has not been a large amount of research in Australia into the nature and effects of the work of the principal. More significantly for the present paper, there is a dearth of studies focussing on beginning principals. A similar situation has existed in the U.S. and the U.K., as noted by Hall and Mani (1989). In Australia, Willis (1980) and Clarke (1986) have reported studies which gave attention to the work-life of principals who were already established in their positions, while Thomas and Muscio (1984) identified "the arriving principal" as a topic of concern following interviews with 87 principals in three capital cities. More recently, Harvey (1988) conducted an extensive study of newly appointed school principals in the state of Western Australia, designed to provide information for the planning of professional development activities for principals, particularly in relation to "emergent policies such as school development". However, none of these or other Australian studies have focussed comprehensively on the nature of the work-life of beginning principals and the nature of the support they need or have available to them.

On the other hand, there has been significant research into the induction and work-life of beginning teachers (Tisher, 1978, 1979; McArthur, 1981). McArthur's interest was in the socialisation of teachers into their new profession, and, using a questionnaire, he focussed his research in the first instance on the 'reality shock' phase of the initial teaching experience. This part has been published separately (McArthur, 1978). The later part of the study was broader, and gave attention to the dissipation of 'reality shock' over time, changes in commitment and career orientation, and differences on variables such as custodial attitudes towards pupils.

The present study was designed to help redress this imbalance in the currently available research on principals in Australia. It was influenced by previous work in the United Kingdom (Weindling and Earley, 1987) and current research in the United States (Hall and Parkay, in press).

The Beginning Principals Study

The Beginning Principals Study was commenced towards the end of 1988 when the new principals who were to take up their positions in primary and secondary schools in the state of Victoria for the first time were identified from lists obtained from the Ministry of Education. From these, eight (four primary and four secondary) were selected at random, with provisions to ensure that the small sample was broadly representative of the range of principals and schools in the Victorian public school system. This involved making sure that there was a reasonable geographic and socio-economic spread of schools, and, given that the majority of principals were male, that there was at least one female amongst the primary and secondary schools selected. Beginning principals were defined as those who had not held a principal's position in the past, nor acted as principal for a substantial period of time. (A total of four weeks was used as a guide.)

All principals selected in this way agreed to take part in the study. Each was assigned to a researcher so that each of the four researchers in the team had responsibility for two principals. A school visit was made to each principal at the start of the school year, and there were three further site visits spread over the year from February to December. In addition, telephone interviews with each principal were held every three or four weeks. Interview guides were used for both telephone and site interviews, and written reports were completed following every interview. These were developed by the researchers using as a basis the U.S. study which had commenced a few months earlier. The use of predominantly open-ended questions in the guides allowed the principals to elaborate to the extent they wished. Significant issues raised in one interview were followed up on subsequent occasions in order to assist the continuity of the picture developing and the meaning of the data. The research team met at least monthly to discuss the progress of the study and to ensure consistency of approach to interviews.

In addition to the intensive study of the small sample of beginning principals, a survey of all 53 principals who first took up a principalship in February 1989 in Victorian public schools was carried out using a nine-page questionnaire. In keeping with the rest of the study, the purpose of the questionnaire was to investigate roles, key issues, sources of support, and concerns of the beginning principals. The survey was carried out in October and achieved an 80 per cent response rate.

At the end of the year a meeting of all members of the small sample and the researchers was held to gain feedback on the research approach used, to provide some skeletal feedback to the participants, and to gather more data.

In the following year the process was repeated with the cohort of beginning principals who took up their positions for the first time at the start of 1990, except that a small sample of four (two primary, two secondary) instead of eight, as in 1989, was selected for close study. This, together with the survey of all new principals which was also replicated in 1990, allowed the findings from the previous year to be compared with those from a new sample.

Collaboration with researchers involved in the U.S. Beginning Principal Study (Hall and Parkay, in press), and reference to the work of Weindling and Earley (1987) provided a useful start for the present study. It also has provided a basis for comparison between the roles of beginning principals in the U.K., the U.S., and Australia to be explored in the near future.

Concerns Analysis

The method of analysis used to identify common professional concerns of the beginning principals in their first half year consisted of the following steps:

1. Each researcher developed a short summary of approximately 600 words for his or her two principals, identifying and listing their major concerns. All four researchers then read all interview reports and summaries for all principals.

2. At a meeting, each researcher gave an oral commentary on the principals for whom he or she was responsible. This was followed by extensive discussion and argument. As a result, the researchers identified seven clusters of concerns which were seen to be of major importance to all the principals. They included major issues requiring significant effort and attention to overcome existing deficiencies, to solve pressing problems, or to make needed improvements. A small number of more minor concern areas were identified, involving issues that were of major importance to some of the principals but not all.

3. As a separate exercise, a research assistant analysed and coded the written reports on each principal in turn, listing major concerns identified for each on the basis of frequency of mention, informed by the context. That is, the context of a written report was used to identify whether or not a particular "mention" was trivial, before any record of it was made. A statement of major concerns clusters, together with a list of minor concerns, was developed.

4. At a further meeting, the researchers and the research assistant considered the two documents derived from the processes in 2. and 3. above. There was strong consistency between the two, although there were some small differences. These differences involved details of the descriptions of the major concerns clusters, and the specifying of concerns that were of sufficient significance to be recorded as "minor" concerns.

   Agreement on these matters was obtained through argument and discussion in the meeting, with reference to illustrative examples and written reports as appropriate. Drafts produced as a result of this meeting were amended through two revisions before an agreed final statement was reached.

5. At the meeting with the principals at the end of the year, the statement of identified common concerns clusters was distributed for comment. All were emphatic that the statement was an accurate summary.

Professional Concerns in the First Half Year

Analysis of the data from the eight beginning principals during the first half year of their principalship produced seven common clusters of major concerns and five minor areas of concern. Not all these concerns produced high anxiety in the principals or were seen by all or most of them as

serious problems. Some of the concern areas were regarded by one or more principals in a positive sense as important issues where significant improvement was essential. However, all were seen by the principals as requiring substantial and persistent effort and attention, often at a high level of intensity, over an extended period - all or most of the period under review.

The seven major concerns clusters identified were:

* Relationships with staff;
* Policy and curriculum reviews and development;
* Administrative structure and financial management;
* Image of the school in the wider community;
* Communication within the school community;
* Time management;
* Student discipline.

The new principals were also very much concerned about providing leadership. In their first half year their concerns in this area were mainly expressed through the above concerns clusters.

The five minor areas of concern identified were:

- the need to improve the physical environment of the school, including variously the quality and appearance of buildings and grounds, and the provision of specialist facilities;

- lack of support from the central Ministry of Education or its regional offices;

- the extent to which decision-making within the school should be collaborative;

- the lack of preparation for dealing with non-teaching staff such as cleaners, gardeners, canteen workers, and related industrial relations issues;

- maintaining the number and classifications of teachers at the prescribed level - neither under nor over staffed.

In addition, all eight principals commented on the huge number of things to be done in their new role, the variety and number of the demands on their time, and the multitude of problems to be solved, resulting in their being unable to address important educational priorities. One of the principals, when asked in mid February (two weeks after the start of school) "How do you see yourself as principal at this moment?" replied "Tired; I've never worked so hard in my life as I have since the 30th January - the last two weeks have been phenomenal in terms of time and effort.

The seven major concerns clusters will now be discussed in more detail.

Relationships With Staff

Relationships with staff, both teaching and non-teaching, was perhaps the most persistent theme that arose in discussion with the new principals. Non-teaching staff included cleaners (janitors), gardeners, canteen workers, office and other clerical workers, and casual maintenance employees. The concerns within this cluster covered a wide range, and were subsequently divided into smaller clusters following a second stage analysis, as indicated in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1: Categories of Principal-Staff Relationship Concern

Category	Illustrative Example
Personal/social	"It is difficult to be too human initially, because they can get at you too easily. So, for my own self protection, I put up a facade. I wasn't put here to make friends."
Supervisory	"There are still some staff that need a bomb under them; there's been some progress made in two cases - one doesn't leave the school any more during the day, and in the other case the staff member is participating a little more. This is being done by using a mixture of the principal's right to tell what his responsibilities are, and just encouraging them. In the case of the teacher who was going home during the day, the only way I could deal with this was just to issue an instruction."
Supportive	"... where help is needed [by a teacher in the classroom] it should be provided by the senior executive of the school, in particular the principal. I am the father confessor."
	"Some [staff members] are co-operating for what they see as longer term benefits. Others are testing me out, and I am aware of some "white-anting" by the Deputy Principal..."
	"I will try to keep them [teachers] feeling secure."
Industrial	"Knowing the industrial agreements [of non teaching staff] is not something I thought I would need early on."
	"I feel unskilled in the area of industrial relations, and in the general people management area."
Leadership	"Staff expect direction, staff expect me to show leadership, but they also expect me to listen and be responsive ... it's incredibly hard to know which line to take."

There were some specific role responsibilities that had the potential to be particularly testing for the new principals in terms of their relationships with teaching staff. These included the need to work effectively with the Local Administrative Committee, the Curriculum Committee, and the various selection panels for nominating staff to positions of responsibility within the school. Administrative and curriculum committees are composed of elected members of staff, including union representatives, and nominees of the principal. The principal may choose to be a member of these committees or may use them as a source of advice for decision-making. In particular, the task of nominating teachers "in excess" to current staffing requirements was a difficult one for the principals. It has assumed significant proportions in many secondary schools recently due to declining enrolments. Teachers declared in excess are not given a teaching load and are subject to transfer to another school.

In the cases of four of the principals, significant conflict arose from the appointment of the new principal in preference to an existing staff member (usually the deputy principal or an acting principal) who was also an applicant for the position. In one extreme case, the new principal was effectively prevented from visiting the school prior to his taking up his appointment, and in the new year faced a situation where there was a staff faction which consistently opposed his views and initiatives. It is, perhaps, of concern to note that all but one of the beginning principals experienced some degree of conflict with their deputy.

Policy and Curriculum Reviews and Development

The eight principals all nominated curriculum development and the need to have clear curriculum policies and documentation as being among the most important issues requiring their attention. They all considered the existing curriculum policies in their schools were inadequate in some ways and needed urgent attention. (It must be noted that, in Victorian schools, although state-wide curriculum frameworks are in effect, the responsibility for the school curriculum rests with the school council. The extent of decision-making is greatest in the secondary schools, where curriculum committees are mandatory, and positions of Curriculum Co-ordinator are held by senior teaching staff.)

In all but one of the schools the principals expressed concern at the lack or inadequacy of written policies on other important issues, including student discipline, student welfare, admissions, lateness, assessment and reporting, staff induction and development. They believed these deficiencies inhibited the smooth and effective running of the school, and consequently they saw the writing, rewriting, or reviewing of some or all of these policies as being amongst their main goals for the year. However, the extent of these policy-based goals varied greatly from one principal to another.

In one small but culturally diverse secondary school the principal set a goal of reviewing all major school policies in his first year, but giving particular attention to the curriculum ("... the school is basically directionless; I want to put it on track, by implementing Curriculum Frameworks") and the development of a bill of rights "for the kids, which details their rights and responsibilities and the rights and responsibilities of teachers." In another (primary) school the new principal reported at the start of the year that he was "reasonably happy with what is happening in the classroom and the school in general", but that the curriculum policy was not up to date - "There hasn't been sufficient review and people have been going their own way for years, and, in fact, there is no real coherent policy of curriculum within the school."

Administrative Structure and Financial Management

Seven of the principals had concerns about establishing effective systems to manage administrative and financial matters within the school; to most it was a matter of some urgency. Six considered the existing systems and procedures and/or records were unsatisfactory; of these, three took the necessary steps to computerise the systems. In two schools the situation was made worse by the fact that one or more members of administrative staff had resigned before the start of the school year.

Furthermore, the principals were apprehensive about their ability to handle the necessary financial matters effectively due to inexperience in this area, and after only a short briefing at an induction program conducted for new principals by the Ministry of Education.

One principal identified "sorting out the administrative mess" as one of the key challenges facing her early in the year. Another stated that he would have liked to have "more support on the financial side, such as a bursar to go through financial matters with, or a Ministry person to train new staff in word processing. I've phoned up the Regional Office a million times!" A third reported that the financial situation he found at the school created a dilemma for him: "No budgeting had been done, and therefore I had to spend a great deal of time out of school to get things in order so that the school could actually function ... . The dilemma is, do you go ahead and do all the financial planning and act immediately - in about a week - or do you spend six to eight weeks consulting with people first? I decided that it was so urgent that it had to be done straight away."

After the first two months or so, the intensity of the concerns over administrative and financial matters diminished significantly in relation to other concerns as the principals took action to solve their immediate problems, and as other issues intruded more forcefully into their daily lives.

Image of the School in the Wider Community

Raising the public image of the school, either to gain greater community support, or to prevent falling enrolments and the consequent threat of amalgamation with another school or closure, was a major concern expressed by six of the eight principals. Various means were used to achieve this end, including improving the school's academic performance in the senior secondary school years, involving and informing parents through meetings, newsletters, and information sheets, strengthening relations with the local press, and advertising in the local press and, in one case on radio. The principals also referred to the need to develop in parents a sense of ownership of the school, which would contribute to the on-going support for the school.

One principal established a newspaper in his primary school to be published every two weeks, "... to promote lots of views about the school and to keep everyone informed of issues." He felt that this would be important in the development of good communication between this school and the outside community. Another, as principal of a secondary school, invited 25 principals of primary schools in the local area to lunch as a public relations exercise in the first three months of her principalship. A third reported: "I inherited a very poor pass rate for the [Year 12 external examinations]. ... The poor pass rate upsets parents and can dramatically affect enrolments, with kids leaving in droves as the parents lose confidence in the school."

Communication

Communication between the various groups within the school community - principal, staff, parents, and students - was identified as an important issue for all principals, and seven considered there was an urgent need to improve the level or quality of the communication. Depending on the circumstances, the principals took a variety of actions to improve the situation. In almost every case, the change created some controversy. However, this controversy did not seem necessarily to jeopardise the success of the change made.

One principal reduced the frequency of after-school staff meetings by introducing five-minute briefings each morning. Another eliminated daily morning briefings and placed greater reliance on staff meetings for communication. Others made other changes. "I have changed the staff meetings from once every two weeks in the past to once a week, limiting

these to 10 minutes, on Mondays after school. One is a problem meeting and the other a briefing." I floated the idea of briefing staff before school each day for five minutes, thereby avoiding one of the staff meetings and keeping staff up to date. There was some doubt about it but we are going to trial that next term."

"Finding time to meet with staff is a problem. They only want meetings every two weeks of one hour, but I feel I need more, so I've asked for 10 minutes of the alternate week, to discuss issues that I think staff shc ld have input on."

Principals also tended to make use of printed news and information bulletins for keeping staff informed and for seeking their input on various matters.

Student Discipline

"Many people say that the curriculum is the biggest issue, but I don't agree with that; I think it is the second biggest issue. I think the biggest issue is classroom management - control, discipline, welfare - those issues are the number one."

In some ways this was a rather surprising statement, made 10 weeks into the school year, by the principal of a school where student discipline problems did not make themselves evident, either to the casual observer of the school in operation, or from the general comments of the principal or staff. It is indicative, however, of the view amongst the principals that student discipline and welfare were matters of fundamental importance in their schools, and were rated as major concerns in six of the eight schools. Underlying all comments made about student discipline was a view that the school needed to have clearly developed policies, so that all staff in the school were working within the same framework, and so that students knew that the framework was. "There is a discipline problem here that has existed for a while. There is a need to get the kids to strengthen their own perceptions of their own responsibilities for their behaviour. [One of my goals is] to do something about it."

There was great variation in the nature of the issues the principals became involved in, both within and between schools. These issues ranged from relatively minor matters, such as lateness and non-adherence to the school uniform, to more major issues including theft and continued absence from school. In many cases the principals found themselves with difficult decisions to make as to what action they should take.

"... I have found myself having to enforce rules that I really didn't want to, for example, keeping kids out of the corridors at lunch time, not letting them go down the street, etc.."

"... the police found five students smoking dope in [the local shopping centre] - these were under-cover police. The parents were very distressed, I spoke at length with the parents, and it took a long time to work through. The parents had to be involved because there was a possibility of two of the students being charged. It is going to have some long-term positive effects because now the police will be working with us in the school concerning smoking dope, etc. And on top of that I had a staff meeting and then a students' meeting where all the students and all the staff know what's happened (they weren't told the kids' names, but they all know!). It means that the kids now know what our attitude is and we have done it in a formal way, so that the kids have no doubt what we expect of them."

Time Management

Working out how much time to spend on each aspect of their work was a concern for all the principals. Especially in the first weeks, administrative tasks seemed to occupy an unreasonable amount of time to the detriment of other activities. Furthermore, lack of experience often meant they spent an inappropriately large amount of time on certain problems. This was exacerbated by the numerous and very varied demands on the principal's time. One saw herself as operating in a "crisis mode" seven weeks into the year. Although she could see this at the time, she was not able to change it immediately. Another reported that "... time, or lack of it, is the greatest hindrance to achieving my goals." She thought some advice on time management may be useful, pointing out that she works from 8.15 a.m. - 5.45 p.m., "... but when I get home I have to turn off because I become a full-time mother at least until 9.00 p.m." A third commented that "It's a problem to keep on top of everything; there is just so much going on at present ..."

The 1990 Small Sample

Analysis of the data from the four beginning principals in the 1990 sample is not yet complete. However, results to date indicate a high level of consistency with the 1989 results, with four notable differences.

Firstly, while the principals all commented on the number and diversity of tasks related to their new role, and the need to be able to deal with the large number of things happening at the same time, the issue of time management as such did not appear to be a major concern in the first half year. However, the analysis revealed it as a minor concern.

Second, the major concerns cluster Image of the School in the Community was replaced by a related concern: District Provision and School Amalgamations. It appeared that this change was brought about by a change in the external context. In the intervening 12 months the Ministry of Education had developed requirements for schools to provide comprehensive curriculum offerings on a district basis, and for nearby schools to amalgamate under certain enrolment and other conditions.

Third, a major concern about student discipline was not evident in the 1990 sample. Finally, Leadership emerged as a separate, definable major concerns cluster, whereas in 1989, leadership concerns appeared to be expressed through the other major concerns identified.

In summary, the current analysis of the four 1990 principals' interviews reveals the following areas of major concern:

* Relationships with staff;
* Policy and curriculum review and development;
* Administrative structure and financial management;
* District provision and school amalgamation;
* Communication within the school community;
* Leadership.

Areas of minor concern identified include: Staffing, Time Management, Relations with the Ministry, Networking (beyond the school), and Staff Development.

The Surveys of Beginning Principals

It was of interest to examine the results of the state-wide surveys of the new principals who took up their principalships for the first time at the start of 1989 and 1990 respectively for evidence supporting or

contradicting the findings from the small sample studies. It should be noted that it was not possible to obtain the detailed information from the questionnaires that was obtained from the many interviews; the questionnaire was designed largely to gather data of a somewhat different kind. Moreover, the principals completed the questionnaires late in the school year, when the foci of their major concerns had changed to some extent (according to our sample principals). In such circumstances, the intensity of recalled concerns may have been lessened by time and intervening events.

Eighty per cent of the 53 beginning principals responded to the questionnaire. Issues which presented problems, according to the respondents, covered a wide spectrum. Matters of major concern were curriculum development, school finances and their management, managing the mail and information flow, creating a better public image for the school, student discipline, problems related to school buildings, and improvement in consultative procedures. Sixty per cent of the respondents mentioned curriculum development as one of the most pressing tasks ahead of them as they took up the position of principal; fifty per cent mentioned the development of a workable accounting system, twenty five per cent referred to improving the school's image, and twenty five per cent to the development of other school policies. The general trends emerging from the analysis of the responses from the 1990 questionnaires appear to be similar.

Discussion

The analyses reported in this paper were used in an effort to determine whether areas of major concern which were common to all or most beginning principals could be identified. The outcome of such analyses would have important implications for understanding the task facing beginning principals and for training and induction procedures.

On the basis of the findings reported here, we would tentatively conclude that there are some aspects of the Victorian school principal's role that typically elicit high levels of concern in beginning principals in the first few months of their new position. These include: their relationships with staff, policy development (especially curriculum policy), administrative and financial management, communication in the school, coping with the large number and wide range of tasks inherent in the role, the image and role of the school in the wider community, leadership. In addition, while some of these common professional concerns of beginning principals may be stable over a long time period (e.g. relationships with staff), others (e.g. image and role of the school in the wider community) may be subject to significant modification due to changes in the external environment.

In considering these tentative conclusions, it must be borne in mind that they are based on data gathered from only a small number of beginning principals in a limited time frame, even if surveys of all beginning principals in particular cohorts tend to support rather than contradict these conclusions. Even more important is the fact that, whereas the present analysis focuses on finding commonalities between the principals' early professional concerns, a striking observation from the data collected is the differences in the nature of the particular tasks and problems which demanded the principals' attention and caused them difficulty and anxiety. Put another way, one of the common aspects of the beginning principals' role was the number and diversity of tasks presenting themselves. However, the nature of the tasks which presented problems for individual principals varied greatly from school to school and from time to time.

Future Directions of the Research

The current research in the Beginning Principals Study is continuing in two ways. First, analysis of data gathered in the two years of the project completed to date is still under way. Future analyses will focus on entry to the principalship, the beginning principal as a new manager, and differences between main groupings of new principals: primary and secondary, men and women, February and July starters. A paper on emerging power and leadership has been prepared (Matthews and Beeson, 1991).

Second, it is planned that the study will continue for five years. The extended study will provide an opportunity to observe how the principals adapt to their new roles over a longer period, including how their concerns change as their time in the job increases, and to trial the provision of support systems. In addition, it is planned to extend the study to at least one other Australian state from 1992.

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